



Kremlin Blames US For Crashed Drone: ‘Flying With Transponders Off Towards Russian Border’

Description

Update(1510ET): After nearly two hours since the story first broke in international press, the Kremlin has issued its version of events concerning the US drone crash in the Black Sea Tuesday. The Russian Defense Ministry said nothing about the Pentagon’s **allegations that a Russian Su-27 aircraft dumped fuel on the MQ-9 drone**, but instead blamed the pair of Russian jets’ erratic maneuvering for the collision.

“US drone MQ-9 fell into the Black Sea on Tuesday morning due to its own sharp maneuvering, Russian fighters did not come into contact with it and did not use weapons, the Russian Defense Ministry said,” [according](#) to Russian media. The statement is as follows [emphasis ours]:

“As a result of sharp maneuvering around 09:30 Moscow time [06:30 GMT], unmanned aerial vehicle MQ-9 went into an uncontrolled flight with a loss of altitude and collided with the water surface. The Russian fighters **did not use airborne weapons, did not come into contact with the unmanned aerial vehicle and returned safely to their home airfield**” the ministry said.

The Russian fighters had been scrambled in response to the drone being picked up on radar: “The ministry clarified that on the morning of March 14, the airspace control of the Russian Aerospace Forces had recorded the flight of US unmanned aerial vehicle MQ-9 over the Black Sea in the region of the Crimean peninsula in the direction of the Russian state border.” However, the ministry further noted that the UAV had been **flying with its transponders turned off while headed towards Russia’s border**.

Interestingly, the Kremlin is accusing the Pentagon of ignoring military-to-military protocols related to the war in Ukraine, established in order to avoid inadvertent NATO-Russia clashes:

The flight of the drone “was carried out with transponders turned off, violating the

boundaries of the area of the temporary regime for the use of airspace, **established for the purpose of conducting a special military operation**, communicated to all users of international airspace and published in accordance with international standards,” the MoD said.

So given the Russian side has confirmed there was no shootdown, both sides can collectively breathe a sigh of relief for now, given this was a highly dangerous incident that had the potential to unleash a shooting war as the two superpower rivals continue crisscrossing airspace over the Black Sea, not far from frontline fighting in Ukraine.

* * *

Update(1328ET): The US military statement of events, blaming a pair of Russian fighter jets for “reckless” maneuvers which resulted in the MQ-9 drone being struck and crashing in international waters at a [“complete loss”](#):

Two Russian Su-27 aircraft conducted an unsafe and unprofessional intercept with a U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance unmanned MQ-9 aircraft that was operating within international airspace over the Black Sea today.

At approximately 7:03 AM (CET), **one of the Russian Su-27 aircraft struck the propeller of the MQ-9**, causing U.S. forces to have to bring the MQ-9 down in international waters. Several times before the collision, the Su-27s dumped fuel on and flew in front of the MQ-9 in a reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner. This incident demonstrates a lack of competence in addition to being unsafe and unprofessional.

“Our MQ-9 aircraft was conducting routine operations in international airspace when it was **intercepted and hit by a Russian aircraft, resulting in a crash and complete loss of the MQ-9**,” said U.S. Air Force Gen. James B. Hecker, commander, U.S. Air Forces Europe and Air Forces Africa. “In fact, this unsafe and unprofessional act by the Russians nearly caused both aircraft to crash.”

“U.S. and Allied aircraft will continue to operate in international airspace and we call on the Russians to conduct themselves professionally and safely,” Hecker added.

This incident follows a pattern of dangerous actions by Russian pilots while interacting with U.S. and Allied aircraft over international airspace, including over the Black Sea. These aggressive actions by Russian aircrew are dangerous and could lead to miscalculation and unintended escalation.

NSC spokesman John Kirby followed up by saying the US aircraft posed no threat to anyone, and that it was operating in international airspace. He additionally confirmed it was brought down in international waters. Presumably there may be a recovery operation underway.

Kirby stressed in a briefing, “If the message is that they want to deter or dissuade us from flying and operating in international airspace over the Black Sea, that message will fail.”

NSC's John Kirby says that intercepts of planes and drones are common, but this is the "first time an intercept resulted in a splashing of one of our drones"

— Paul McLeary (@paulmcleary) [March 14, 2023](#)

Reaction from Trump Jr...

The US Air Force issued a statement accusing the Russian aircraft of acting in a "reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner."

Environmentally unsound. That's what they're worried about. Not the start of WWIII.

Trump was right again!
<https://t.co/LxJAP5JgbM>

— Donald Trump Jr. (@DonaldJTrumpJr) [March 14, 2023](#)

* * *

A major incident involving a US military drone is being widely reported as happening over the Black Sea on Tuesday, with NATO sources telling AFP there's been **an "incident"** and that an investigation is ongoing. Western military sources identified that **a US-made Reaper drone may have crashed** for as yet [unknown reasons](#):

*"Something happened but **we don't have confirmation that the drone has been shot down**. An investigation is underway," one of two Western sources who confirmed "an incident" told AFP.*



MQ-9 drone, military file image

“The sources, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information, did not say which country was operating the drone, which is used extensively by the United States as well as many of its NATO allies,” the AFP report continues.

As more details trickled out in the minutes following initial reports, a war correspondent for Politico is citing US European Command officials who say **the US drone has been downed over the Black Sea.**

“A Russian Su-27 fighter collided with a US MQ-9 drone over the Black Sea this morning, causing the drone to crash, US European Command says,” Politico Paul McLeary writes.

NEW: A Russian Su-27 fighter collided with a US MQ-9 drone over the Black Sea this morning, causing the drone to crash, US European Command says.

— Paul McLeary (@paulmcleary) [March 14, 2023](#)

Naturally, the next question is what happened to the Russian jet... did it too crash? If so, the incident poses great danger for possible imminent US-Russia escalation, given this is the kind of rare direct military encounter and incident that many have long feared could unleash a deadly spiral of escalation.

The White House was briefed over the incident, according to NSC spokesman John Kirby:

BIDEN BRIEFED ON RUSSIA JET INCIDENT THIS MORNING: KIRBY

However, some pundits and reporters are already positing **a narrative of events which contradicts the Pentagon’s**

. Is Pentagon leadership hoping to avoid WW3 by downplaying it as a mere accident (in the scenario this was actually a shootdown incident)? The Kremlin version of events will be interesting to hear as the aftermath unfolds.

The two Russian Su-27 returned to their baser in [#Crimea](#) after destroying a \$32 million, for the latest versions of MQ-9, [#US](#) drone.

— Elijah J. Magnier ?? (@ejmalrai) [March 14, 2023](#)

developing...

by Tyler Durden

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main
3. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created

03/15/2023