

Navy Destroyers Monitor Russian, Chinese Flotilla Off Alaska

The U.S. Navy dispatched four destroyers along with P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft as a combined Russian and Chinese flotilla of 11 ships approached the coast of Alaska earlier this week in what has been called an “unprecedented” operation by a foreign naval force.

U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, told [KTUU-TV](#) the operation happened “within the last few days.” [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported Sunday that the ships came close to the Aleutian Islands but never entered U.S. territorial waters and have since left. A spokesman for U.S. Northern Command told The Journal the patrol was not considered a threat.

“First, this is unprecedented, not just for Alaska, but for America to have 11 warships jointly being operated by the Chinese and Russians — who are increasingly working together — essentially doing freedom of navigation and navigation operations incursions into Alaska’s area,” Sullivan told KTUU.

The Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment, The Journal reported. A spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington said the patrol wasn’t aimed at sending a message to the U.S.

“According to the annual cooperation plan between the Chinese and Russian militaries, naval vessels of the two countries have recently

conducted joint maritime patrols in relevant waters in the western and northern Pacific Ocean,” China Embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu told The Journal. “This action is not targeted at any third party and has nothing to do with the current international and regional situation.”

The Arleigh Burke-class destroyers USS John S. McCain, USS Benfold, USS John Finn, and USS Chung-Hoon responded to the flotilla, tracking its movements, a U.S. defense official told The Journal. The four destroyers were in addition to the U.S. maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft.

In September 2022, a flotilla of seven Russian and Chinese warships patrolled near the Aleutian Islands, and only a Coast Guard vessel responded, The Journal reported. Sullivan, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called the response to that incursion “tepid.”

Sullivan has pressed military leaders for an increase in assets and infrastructure to defend Alaska and the nation. Alaska, which has more total shoreline than any other state, does not have a Navy or Marine Corps base.

“I think it just underscores the need for the continued buildup of not only forces in Alaska,” Sullivan told KTUU, “but the infrastructure that can handle them, particularly infrastructure like the deepwater port of Nome, and a greater naval, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps presence in Alaska.”

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