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NORAD Intercepts Russian IL-20 over Alaska ADIZ

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– *Categories: Defence & Security*

The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) intercepted a Russian Ilyushin IL-20 surveillance aircraft on Friday, August 22, 2025, after it entered the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). The incident marked the second consecutive day Russian intelligence-gathering aircraft approached U.S. airspace, prompting a coordinated response from U.S. and Canadian forces.

NORAD confirmed that the IL-20 remained outside sovereign U.S. and Canadian airspace, but its presence within the ADIZ triggered standard defensive measures. The zone functions as an early-warning buffer, requiring all aircraft approaching North America to identify themselves for national security purposes.

U.S. assets dispatched included two F-16 Fighting Falcons, a KC-135 Stratotanker, and an E-3 Sentry early-warning aircraft. These aircraft conducted visual identification of the Russian plane and monitored its movements until it departed the area. Officials emphasized that the flight was not considered a direct threat but highlighted the importance of vigilance in safeguarding North American skies.

The latest activity followed a similar flight the day prior, when another IL-20 was tracked near St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, roughly 30 miles from U.S. territory. Both flights were monitored closely by NORAD throughout their duration.

The IL-20, known to NATO as “Coot,” is a turboprop surveillance platform designed for electronic intelligence collection. Equipped with specialized sensors, it intercepts

communication signals and radar emissions, making it one of Russia's primary intelligence aircraft.

Russian military flights in the Alaska ADIZ are not new, but the back-to-back missions underscore Moscow's continued interest in testing U.S. and Canadian air defense responses. Analysts note that these operations often serve dual purposes: collecting intelligence while signaling Russia's strategic presence in the Arctic and North Pacific.

Defense officials say such flights highlight the necessity of NORAD's "layered defense posture," ensuring that U.S. and allied forces can respond swiftly to unidentified or uncooperative aircraft. While recent encounters have not escalated into hostile actions, they serve as a reminder of the region's strategic importance.

"The ability to detect, identify, and respond quickly to any aircraft approaching North America is a cornerstone of our defense," a NORAD statement read. "These interceptions reinforce our commitment to protecting U.S. and Canadian airspace."

At the time of reporting, no additional Russian aircraft had been detected near Alaska. Still, U.S. defense officials stressed that continuous monitoring will remain essential as global tensions persist.