

Chinese Spy Plane Violates Japan's Airspace Over the East China Sea



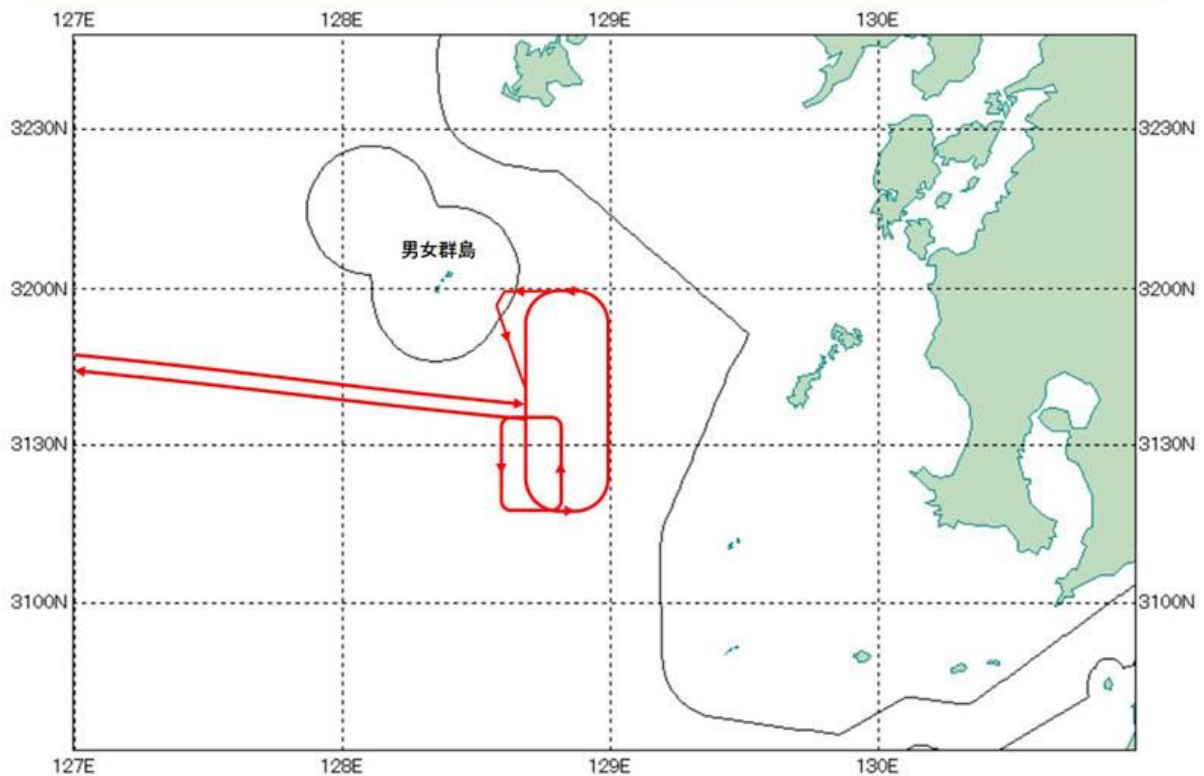
A Y-9DZ PLA Air Force surveillance plane near Japan, April 2024 (file image courtesy Japan Self Defense Forces)

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On Monday, a Chinese military surveillance aircraft transited into Japanese airspace off the Danjo Islands without permission, according to Japan's ministry of defense. It was the first time in recent memory that a Chinese aircraft has violated Japan's sovereign boundaries.

A chart released along with the statement shows that the aircraft made two racetrack search patterns over open water, and it deviated from one of these tracks to cross over into Japan's airspace near Danjo. The Japan Air Self Defense Force scrambled fighters to intercept the intruder. The incursion lasted just two minutes, and the Chinese plane turned to the south and exited the area. The aircraft did not use any weaponry during the transit, the ministry emphasized.

行動概要



Japan's foreign ministry summoned the Chinese charge d'affaires to lodge a strong formal protest.

"This violation of Japanese airspace is extremely regrettable, and we have lodged a very strong protest to the Chinese government through diplomatic channels and strongly urged them to prevent recurrence," a spokesperson for the Japanese government told NHK.

The aircraft was a Shaanxi Y-9 spy plane, according to the ministry. The Y-9 has more than a dozen variants, including an anti-submarine warfare version; an accompanying photo suggests that it was a Y-9DZ electronic surveillance aircraft, based on its distinctive antenna arrays and the long radar pod on the underbelly. The Y-9DZ is a new model and was first photographed in 2023 off the coast of Japan.

According to Atlas News, possible surveillance targets for the flight could have included Japanese aircraft training or weapons testing activities off the west coast of Nagasaki prefecture. The area is also located just to the south of the joint U.S.-Japanese naval base at Sasebo, the home port for U.S. 7th Fleet's amphibious force.

The U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy and the South Korean military are currently undertaking a massive amphibious warfare drill in the Sea of Japan, Exercise Ssang Yong 24. The exercise involves no fewer than 40 warships, making it the largest iteration since these joint drills were relaunched in 2023.