

Chinese Air Force Deployment to Russian Arctic

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On July 24, 2024, Russian and Chinese bombers conducted a joint patrol in the North Pacific, Chukchi Sea and Bering Sea. It is reported that two H-6K bombers from China and two Tu-95MS bombers from Russia, as well as escort fighters (Su-30SM and Su-35S) took part in the joint patrol. This was the first time that Chinese bombers had been deployed to the Arctic Circle.

The H-6K is based on the Soviet Tu-16 medium-range bomber and has a range of about 6,000 km. Therefore, it is very likely that the H-6K was deployed from a base in Russia in order to reach the Arctic. Possible candidates are the Elizovo airfield in Kamchatka or the Anadyr airfield in Chukotka. We observed both airfields with a high-resolution optical satellite.

As a result, on July 24, we confirmed that two large Y-20 transport aircraft of the Chinese Air Force were deployed at the latter. They are believed to have come to support the H-6K. Images taken on July 23 at the same location did not confirm either the H-6K or the Y-20.

