

US and Russian warships nearly collide in the Philippine Sea

Kevin Reed
8 June 2019

In an encounter coinciding with a visit to Russia by Chinese President Xi Jinping, a US warship nearly collided with a Russian destroyer on Friday in the Philippine Sea. According to reports from both US and Russian media sources, the two ships came within 50 to 100 feet of each other.

The Russian news agency TASS reported that at 11:45 A.M. local time a US guided-missile cruiser impeded the Russian vessel by passing 50 meters in front of it and forcing the anti-submarine destroyer to perform a dangerous maneuver. “The US cruiser Chancellorsville suddenly changed its course and crossed the Admiral Vinogradov destroyer’s course,” the Russian press service said.

A press statement on the website of the US Navy’s 7th Fleet reported the episode as “an unsafe maneuver” by the Russian destroyer against the US ship that forced it “to execute all engines back full” to avoid a collision. The Navy public affairs release said the US considers Russia’s actions “not in accordance” with international regulations and maritime customs.

The Navy report includes two videos taken aboard the US vessel aimed at substantiating the US version of the events. However, the videos show the two ships in close proximity and travelling in parallel with the Russian destroyer gaining on and pulling closer to the US vessel, but it is unclear as to how they came to be in this position.

The *New York Times* reported that a US official said the encounter took place about 160 miles south of Okinawa, a Japanese island where the American military has had facilities since the end of World War II. While US news media pointed to the presence of Russian naval vessels in waters “more than 1,200 miles from the Russian Pacific Fleet’s home of Vladivostok,” the presence of the US Navy more than 6,000 miles

from the continental American shores is not questioned.

Russian media released a statement from Maj. Gen. Vladimir Bogatyrev who said, “it is not by chance that these actions happened during the visit to Russia by the head of the People’s Republic of China.” Bogatyrev added that the US provoked the incident to “demonstrate to us the supposed strength of the American fleet and lawless behavior in the wide expanse of global seas.”

The near miss in the Philippine Sea is the latest in a series of recent confrontations between the US and Russian militaries. On Tuesday, June 5 the US Navy claimed that a US Poseidon aircraft flying over the Mediterranean Sea was intercepted three times by a Russian fighter jet. The Russians disputed the claim saying that its aircraft was operating legally in international airspace. On consecutive days in May, US warplanes intercepted Russian bombers and fighter jets off of the Alaskan coast.

In an interview with Fox News, retired admiral and former Allied Supreme Commander of NATO James Stavridis said that it was a “miracle” that the two ships did not collide, adding that the events were “shocking” and demonstrated the potential for a far more serious incident in the future such as a naval collision or an “inadvertent shootdown” of a Russian aircraft.

The meeting between Putin and Xi Jinping at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, as well as the growing political and economic ties between Russia and China, is seen by the Trump administration and the Pentagon as a direct challenge to US domination of global affairs.

There is ample evidence that US imperialism is intensifying military provocations against both China and Russia as part of its global strategy of hegemonic domination of Asia, Europe and the Americas. With

political and trade tensions between the US and its rivals growing in the background, the likelihood of a reckless US military action—such as the episode in the Philippine Sea—sparking a war between nuclear armed powers increases proportionally.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact