



REUTERS

U.S.-Iran tensions rise among downing of U.S. military drone, China, Russia affirm Tehran's right to sovereignty

Iran has shot down a U.S. drone which the elite Revolutionary Guards said on Thursday was flying over southern Iran, raising fears that a major military confrontation could erupt between Tehran and the United States.

In conflicting statements, Guards website Sepah News said the “spy” drone was brought down over the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan, while a U.S. official said a U.S. Navy drone had been shot down in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S.

official's statement resonated with earlier comments by Navy Captain Bill Urban who said no U.S. aircraft were flying over Iran on the day of the downing.



The purported wreckage of a U.S. military drone is seen displayed by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Tehran, Iran. Tasnim News Agency/Handout via REUTERS

In response to the U.S.'s assertion, Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev stated that Russia had military intelligence showing the U.S. drone in Iranian airspace when it was shot down. This intelligence, Patrushev said, proved Iran was justified in shooting down the drone to protect its sovereignty over Iranian airspace.

Reaffirming Iran's resolve, a senior Iranian security official declared that, “our airspace is our red line and Iran has always responded and will continue to respond strongly to any country that violates it.”

Tensions between the two countries have spiked since last year, when the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers.

Among these escalating tensions, China offered strong support to Iran on Friday, with its top diplomat telling Iran's foreign minister that China opposes unilateral U.S. sanctions and acknowledges Tehran's rights to safeguard its interests.

Meeting in Beijing, Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi told Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif that given the important and rapidly-evolving situation, the two needed to strengthen communication and coordination.

“China resolutely opposes the U.S. implementation of unilateral sanctions, understands the current situation and concerns of the Iranian side, and affirms Iran's right to safeguard its legitimate interests,” China's Foreign Ministry paraphrased Wang as saying.

Tensions might escalate further if the remaining parties to the nuclear deal cannot deliver the promised economic relief. In this case, Iran said it would start enriching uranium at higher levels than agreed to under the terms of the deal.