# Near Collision Between MQ-9 Reaper Drones and Russian Su-35 In Syrian Airspace



A potential mid-air collision was narrowly avoided between three MQ-9 Reaper drones and a Russian Su-35 Flanker-E over Syria’s Homs province on June 21, 2023. Major General Yuri Popov of the Russian Aerospace Forces reported the incident to the Russian state news agency TASS, describing the near-miss occurring between 12:33 and 12:46 at altitudes of 7,000 to 8,000 meters above the village of Es-Sukhna. The drones were part of a US-led coalition.

Popov praised the unnamed Russian pilot for taking prompt measures to avert a collision, noting that the flight was authorized by the Syrian government. Additionally, Popov reported 12 airspace violations in the Al-Tanf area on the same day involving different coalition aircraft, including F-15 fighters, Typhoons, and A-10 attack planes.

This incident adds to a history of tense encounters in Syrian airspace between Russian and US military forces since the Syrian civil war began in 2011. Significant past events include a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone being downed by a Russian-manufactured air defense system in 2018 and a U.S. Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet shooting down a Syrian Air Force Su-22 fighter jet in 2017. Reports of other encounters over the Black Sea and in Syrian skies reflect ongoing risks of direct military engagements between the two nations.