**Mysterious Russian spacecraft appears to be STALKING a US spy satellite after maneuvering into a new orbit around Earth**

* **A Russian inspection satellite has recently synchronized its orbit with USA 245**
* **Student blogger tweets movements of satellites based on publicly available data**
* **Cosmos 2542 was launched with the aim of inspecting only Russian satellites**
* **But it's feared the Russian craft could be gathering intelligence to plan an attack**

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A Russian satellite has been shifting its position in orbit to bring it closer to a US spy satellite, according to publicly available data.

The Russian satellite, called Cosmos 2542, synchronised its orbit with USA 245, a US reconnaissance satellite deployed for military and intelligence applications.

The movement of the Russian satellite was tracked on Thursday by Michael Thompson, a graduate student and independent satellite tracker, and detailed [**on Twitter**](https://twitter.com/M_R_Thomp/status/1222990126650994698).

Cosmos 2542 has had the capability to observe USA 245 consistently for the past week and is ‘loitering’ around US 245 in consistent view, he said.

The reason for this behaviour is unknown but it would be unusual for satellites belonging to allied nations to behave in this way, suggesting that there may be a counter-intelligence motive.

Russia has a number of communications satellites positioned above the Earth that the Kremlin could use to gather intelligence or even disable or destroy other satellites, according to [**The Drive**](https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/32031/a-russian-inspector-spacecraft-now-appears-to-be-shadowing-an-american-spy-satellite).

This could potentially usher in a new era of ‘space war’, where weaponised satellites in orbit attempt to gain ground on satellites from other nations.

The Russian satellite was launched in November but only in the last week has it started to orbit relatively close to its American counterpart, according to Thompson based on data [**detailed online**](http://www.satobs.org/seesat/Jan-2020/index.html) by a community of amateur satellite trackers.

‘As I’m typing this, that offset distance shifts between 150 and 300 kilometres [93 and 186 miles] depending on the location in the orbit,’ he tweeted on Thursday.

This distance is relatively close for two satellites orbiting at a speed of thousands of miles an hour – about a second apart, he said.

‘The relative orbit is actually pretty cleverly designed, where Cosmos 2542 can observe one side of the KH11 [USA 245] when both satellites first come into sunlight, and by the time they enter eclipse, it has migrated to the other side.’

The most recent close approach took place on January 21st, but instead of then drifting away as usual, Cosmos 2542 performed a series of maneuvers on the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd to match the period of USA 245. [pic.twitter.com/jSMsytae4X](https://t.co/jSMsytae4X)

Thompson said there is ‘a hell of a lot of circumstances’ that make it look like a known Russian inspection satellite is currently tracking the US spy satellite.

Cosmos 2542 was launched from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome, about 500 miles north of Moscow, back in November, and settled into orbit between 250 miles and 550 miles over the Earth’s surface.

In December, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced it had conducted an experiment to deploy another smaller satellite, called Cosmos 2543, while in orbit, The Drive reports.

When launched, the Russian Ministry of Defense said: ‘The purpose of the experiment is to continue work on assessing the technical condition of domestic satellites.’

On the original launch in November, Russia said that only Russian satellites would be inspected, Thompson added.