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France sends a spy-ship into the Black Sea, the USA sends a missile-armed destroyer

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On Thursday 10 April 2014 at dawn, the destroyer USS Donald Cook passed into the Bosphorus heading for the Black Sea. It was followed an hour later by the French surveillance ship Dupuy de Lôme.

Placed online in French: 11 April 2014
<dl class='spip_document_472 spip_documents spip_documents_left' style='float:left;'><a href="IMG/jpg/USS_Donald_Cook-2.jpg" title='JPEG - 523.7 kb' type="image/jpeg">

USS Donald Cook

The US destroyer had left its base (Norfolk, Virginia) on 31 January for its new base in Spain (at La Rota), to which the destroyers *USS Ross, USS Porter* and *USS Carney* will also be sent. These four vessels of the *Arley Burke class* have to fulfil *"a multitude of missions, including the full spectrum of maritime security operations, multinational exercises, with integration into NATO missions and deployments, as well as the Alliance's antimissile defense",* said Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on February 2012. *"In particular they will be able to operate the SM-3 missile which, joined to the Aegis air defense system, will contribute to building a ballistic antimissile shield in the Mediterranean"* according to Mer et Marine.
<dl class='spip_document_473 spip_documents spip_documents_left' style='float:left;'><a href="IMG/jpg/Dupuy_de_Lome-2.jpg" title='JPEG - 46.9 kb' type="image/jpeg">

Dupuy de Lôme

The *Dupuy de Lôme* is an electromagnetic surveillance ship a little over 100m long, 15m wide, and 3600 tons when loaded. Unique in its kind, it is equipped with two radomes, a large goniometric antenna, state-of-the-art electronics, and satellite transmission systems *via* Inmarsat et Syracuse 3. It was unveiled to the press on 24 October 2005 in Toulon, for the first and last time, because of its "destiny of discretion". At the time it was *"the most modern in its category in the whole world, surpassing the Norwegians and the Russians",* according to its captain, quoted by Mer et Marine. It can travel at 16 knots and be autonomous for 70 days, a period far longer than its usual missions.
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USS Donald Cook passing Istanbul, 10 April

The *Donald Cook* and the *Dupuy de Lôme* should not stay in the Black Sea for more than 21 days, since that is the limit authorized by the Montreux convention for military ships of nations that do not have permanent access there. Both are participating in the politico-military manoeuvres prompted by the "Ukraine crisis". However, the Russian press agency *Novosti*, which takes is information about the passage of these vessels through the Bosphorus from its Ankara office and from the big Turkish daily *Hurriyet,* notes that the missile-carrying frigate *USS Taylor* was already in the Black Sea to February *"to ensure the security of the Olympics in Sochi".*
<dl class='spip_document_476 spip_documents spip_documents_left' style='float:left;'><a href="IMG/jpg/USS_Truxtun__CGN-35__port_quarter-2.jpg" title='JPEG - 2 Mb' type="image/jpeg">

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USS Truxton

In March it was the destroyer *USS Truxtun* (in service since 2009, of the same *Harley Burke* class as the *Donald Cook* and equipped with the same *Aegis* system) that was in the Black Sea - from 8 March to 21 March. But Novosti recalls that, in the words of Sergei Lavrov, *"in the past the presence of US ships in the Black Sea has often exceded the limits of the convention".* (This protestation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs dates from April 2).

One may well question how opportune this incursion is, at a moment when the nations of NATO, protesting vigorously against the placing of Russian troops on Ukraine's eastern border, seem to have obtained a "gesture" from President Putin, who has withdrawn them by 30 km according the visual testimony of the France Inter correspondent on the morning of 11 April.

Would it not be appropriate, at the very least, for the French people and their MPs to be informed of military "gestures" that are far from being minor or risk-free?

On 9 April numerous international NGOs wrote to Presidents Putin and Obama - among them ACDN - emphasizing the nuclear dangers in the Ukraine crisis, in particular *"the serious dangers of escalation and miscalculation that could flow from the crisis".*

"Deterrence is mistakenly extolled for instilling caution in international affairs; moderation and predictability, not brinkmanship, are supposed to be everyone's watchword. And yet escalatory actions have followed one upon another - a pattern witnessed in other crises as well. Given this apparently uncontrollable urge to one-upmanship and the world-threatening nature of nuclear war, it is the height of recklessness that the escalatory ladder is topped off by nuclear war".

The appeal concludes by saying: *"we urge you to find in this crisis an opportunity to prepare for living in a nuclear weapon free world, by dealing with it strictly in non-nuclear terms".*

This warning and this conclusion are addressed to the leaders of the all states implicated in the crisis, especially those of nuclear powers such as France.

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