



Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

A Polish air force F-16 refuels from a U.S. Air Force KC-135 during the NATO Baltic Air Sovereignty Training Event, or BAST-E II, on Tuesday.

NATO aircraft train over the Baltics

BY MARK ABRAMSON

Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — Aircraft from seven NATO nations took to the skies over the Baltics on Tuesday to hone their abilities to work together and reassure three Baltic member countries that the alliance is committed to their defense.

U.S. Air Force F-16s from the 22nd Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, and Air Force KC-135s from the RAF Mildenhall, England-based 351st Air Refueling Squadron were among the forces that participated in the Baltic Air

Sovereignty Training Event, or BAST-E II. It was the second training mission of its type.

Denmark and Poland also provided F-16s, while the Lithuanians supplied at least one L-39 light strike aircraft. An L-159 light combat aircraft from the Czech Republic participated as well. One NATO E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft also took part in the training. A total of 18 aircraft participated.

The Control and Reporting Center at Karmelava, Lithuania, and the Control and Reporting Point at Amari, Estonia, were also involved in the training.

The exercise teaches pilots how to operate with other NATO air forces, said Manfred Reudenbach, deputy chief of public affairs at Allied Air Component Command Headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The training is not targeted for any specific type of threat, Reudenbach said, but aims to improve interoperability and ensure the territorial integrity of the Baltic states.

“It doesn’t involve forward basing. Everything flew from its home base,” Reudenbach said.

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