# Poland intercepts Russian Su-24 as Baltic tensions soar amid NATO drills



A Russian Su-24 fighter jet was intercepted by the Polish Air Force over the Baltic Sea, a move confirmed by Polish Defence Minister Wladysław Kosiniak-Kamysz. According to his statement, a pair of Polish jets were scrambled following an order from NATO’s joint operational command to intercept the aircraft. The Polish jets located the Russian fighter in international airspace late Thursday and managed to 'effectively deter' its actions. Kosiniak-Kamysz remarked on the manoeuvres of the Su-24, stating they indicated deliberate intentions rather than accidental actions, reflecting a pattern of increasing tensions in the region.

This incident is far from isolated. Just earlier this week, Poland reported a sanctioned Russian vessel engaging in 'suspicious manoeuvres' close to a critical power cable connecting Poland and Sweden. Such activities have raised alarms among NATO allies, especially as military exercises are being conducted in the region. Notably, NATO troops have been undertaking training exercises on the strategically significant island of Gotland, which has been under consideration for remilitarisation due to the perceived threats posed by Russia.

Moreover, Poland's military interactions with Russian aircraft have escalated over recent months. Earlier in February 2025, a Russian Su-24MR reconnaissance aircraft violated Polish airspace, temporarily penetrating 6.5 kilometres before altering its course upon Polish military intervention. This and other similar incidents underline a troubling trend of Russian military incursions into neighbouring airspaces, prompting concerns regarding potential miscommunications that could lead to conflict.

The ongoing retired Russian military activities in the Baltic are part of a broader context of rising tensions following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Military operations from Russia have increasingly disrupted the stability of airspace, evidenced by the flyovers of U.S. Navy ships during joint exercises like BALTOPS 24, where Su-24 bombers conducted unprofessional passes over American vessels.Such encounters not only pose risks of miscommunication but also threaten the safety of operations involving NATO forces in the region. A notable incident involved Russian Su-24s flying uncomfortably close to the USS Wasp, leading to disruptions during critical flight operations. U.S. Navy officials subsequently deemed this conduct unsafe, reinforcing the importance for all parties involved in international waters to adhere to professional standards to avoid dangerous miscalculations.

Recent reports have also highlighted an uptick in Russian naval activity, with UK warships actively tracking Russian submarines in the English Channel, a sign of heightened vigilance among NATO allied forces. This comes against the backdrop of large-scale military buildups near Finland's borders and growing anxieties that Russia is accelerating its military preparations for a prolonged conflict with Western nations. Finland's Prime Minister has echoed these sentiments, warning that an attack on Finland or its Baltic neighbours cannot be ruled out.

In response to these developments, Poland has called for enhanced protection measures in the Baltic region to safeguard against potential sabotage and air incursions. This situation has become a focal point of NATO’s ongoing strategy to bolster defence in Eastern Europe, ensuring that the alliance maintains readiness against any aggressive posturing from Russia. The security of the Baltic Sea continues to be a significant concern, as aerial and naval encounters between NATO forces and Russian military assets appear increasingly likely.

As these dynamics shift, the tension in the Baltic Sea highlights the critical need for robust communication and adherence to established protocols among military forces operating in shared international spaces. The ongoing vigilance and readiness of NATO air and naval assets are integral to deterrence efforts and maintaining stability in a region marked by unpredictable military behaviour.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743147/russia-nato-su24-polish-baltic-sea.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/russian-su24-airspace-violation-poland)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743147/russia-nato-su24-polish-baltic-sea.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2024-06-19/baltops-russians-marines-poland-14231567.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2024-06-19/baltops-russians-marines-poland-14231567.html), [[4]](https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/26/europe/russian-military-aircraft-intercepted-intl/index.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://apnews.com/united-states-government-16a8e88dbe2e48658be03d9043d058fb), [[6]](https://www.thedefensepost.com/2025/02/12/poland-russian-aircraft-airspace/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/russian-military-aircraft-violates-polish-1739305908.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743147/russia-nato-su24-polish-baltic-sea.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/russian-su24-airspace-violation-poland> - On February 11, 2025, a Russian Su-24MR reconnaissance aircraft violated Polish airspace over the eastern part of the Gulf of Gdańsk. The incursion lasted for one minute and 12 seconds, with the aircraft penetrating Polish territory to a depth of 6.5 kilometers before altering course. The Polish Operational Command monitored the flight and was in immediate contact with Russian counterparts. Russia acknowledged the violation, attributing it to a navigation system failure on the Su-24MR. This incident is part of a pattern of Russian military aircraft entering the airspace of neighboring countries, raising concerns among NATO members about regional security and the potential for miscommunication or accidents. The Su-24MR is a tactical reconnaissance variant of the Su-24, equipped with advanced surveillance systems, including a side-looking radar, infrared scanner, and photographic cameras. It can gather intelligence up to 400 kilometers away when flying at high altitude. The recent violation underscores the importance of robust airspace monitoring and communication between nations to prevent misunderstandings and maintain regional stability.
3. <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2024-06-19/baltops-russians-marines-poland-14231567.html> - During the Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) 24 exercise in June 2024, Russian Su-24 bombers conducted flyovers over U.S. Navy ships operating in the Baltic Sea. On June 14, two Russian Su-24 bombers flew over the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York and the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp, with one of the planes flying over Wasp at about 500 feet, causing the ship to suspend the takeoff of an MV-22 Osprey. The flyovers were determined to be safe but unprofessional by U.S. Navy officials because the ship was conducting flight operations. The incident highlights the ongoing tensions in the region and the need for vigilance during military exercises. The flyovers were part of a broader pattern of Russian military activity in the Baltic Sea, including previous incidents where Russian Su-24s made passes over the command-and-control ship USS Mount Whitney. The U.S. Navy emphasized the importance of professional conduct in international waters and airspace to prevent misunderstandings and ensure safety.
4. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/26/europe/russian-military-aircraft-intercepted-intl/index.html> - In April 2023, German and British fighter jets intercepted three Russian aircraft in international airspace over the Baltic Sea. The intercepted aircraft included two Su-27 military planes and one Il-20 reconnaissance plane, all flying without transponder signals. The German Armed Forces reported the incident, noting that the Russian planes did not enter the airspace of NATO countries Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania. Since 2004, NATO has secured the Baltic airspace for these countries, regularly deploying fighter jets and personnel to monitor the region. The interception underscores the ongoing vigilance required to maintain airspace security in the Baltic region amid heightened tensions with Russia.
5. <https://apnews.com/united-states-government-16a8e88dbe2e48658be03d9043d058fb> - In April 2016, Russian Su-24 attack planes conducted multiple close-range passes over the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Donald Cook in the Baltic Sea. The Russian planes came as close as an estimated 30 feet from the ship and twice passed below the ship’s navigation bridge. The U.S. European Command deemed the actions unsafe and unprofessional but did not take further action beyond attempting to communicate with the aircraft by radio. The incident occurred while the USS Donald Cook was conducting deck landing drills with an allied military helicopter. The U.S. European Command emphasized concerns about the potential for miscalculation or accident resulting from such maneuvers, highlighting the need for professional conduct in international waters and airspace.
6. <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2025/02/12/poland-russian-aircraft-airspace/> - On February 11, 2025, Poland's army reported that a Russian Su-24MR aircraft briefly violated Polish airspace over the eastern part of the Gulf of Gdańsk. The aircraft, originating from Kaliningrad, entered Polish airspace for one minute and 12 seconds, penetrating up to 6.5 kilometers into Polish territory. Polish airspace control services were in contact with Russian authorities, who confirmed the violation and attributed it to a navigation system failure on the Su-24MR. The incident highlights ongoing tensions in the Baltic region and the importance of maintaining airspace security. Poland has called for increased protection of the Baltic Sea from acts of sabotage and emphasized the need for vigilance in monitoring airspace to prevent such violations.
7. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/russian-military-aircraft-violates-polish-1739305908.html> - On February 11, 2025, a Russian Su-24MR military aircraft violated Polish airspace over the eastern part of the Gulf of Gdańsk. The incident occurred at 2:09 PM local time, with the aircraft penetrating Polish airspace to a maximum depth of 6.5 kilometers and remaining there for 1 minute and 12 seconds. The flight was monitored by the radar systems of the Polish Armed Forces, and following intervention by a Russian Armed Forces navigator, the aircraft altered its course. Polish airspace control services contacted the Russian side, which confirmed the violation and reported that it occurred due to a navigation system failure on the Su-24MR aircraft. This incident is part of a pattern of Russian military aircraft entering the airspace of neighboring countries, raising concerns among NATO members about regional security and the potential for miscommunication or accidents. The recent violation underscores the importance of robust airspace monitoring and communication between nations to prevent misunderstandings and maintain regional stability.