

'Hijacked' Plane in Military Drill

June 07, 2011

The  Moscow Times

WARSAW — NATO and Russia teamed up Tuesday to test their ability to fight terrorism, using a military transport plane to simulate a hijacking over Poland and sending in fighter planes to save it, an official said.

It was the first time NATO and Russia, which doesn't belong to the alliance, had conducted such an anti-terrorism exercise together.

During the drill, the transport plane departed from the southern Polish city of Krakow and was "hijacked" as it flew toward St. Petersburg, said Polish Major Waldemar Krzyzanowski.

Russian Su-27 and Polish F-16 fighter planes escorted the transport plane to a safe landing in Malbork, northern Poland, after being told to assume that terrorists had damaged its navigation system before being overpowered.

Colonel Petr Mikulenko, director of the exercise, told reporters in Warsaw that it mainly focused on an exchange of information of what's going on in the air rather than the defense system.

He described it as "the very first such exercise between Russia and NATO" and said the first day went as planned.

In a similar scenario Wednesday, a Turkish plane is to be "hijacked" over the Black Sea, then brought safely home by Turkish and Russian fighters.

Krzyzanowski said the goal is to coordinate the abilities of NATO countries such as Poland and Turkey to join Russia in quickly tracking down and rescuing hijacked aircraft.

A NATO statement called the exercise "a major milestone" in the so-called Cooperative Airspace Initiative system — a NATO-Russian effort to enhance the collective capability of fighting possible terrorist threats.

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