

Russia Deploying Anti-NATO Air Assets in Belarus Under Guise of Training



Sukhoi Su-30SM.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sukhoi_Su-30SM_in_flight_2014.jpg Attribution: CCA-SA Unported

By Ray Finch

OE Watch Commentary

The brief excerpt from the mostly pro-Kremlin source *Svobodnaya Pressa* describes the decade-long attempt by the Kremlin to convince Belarusian President Lukashenko to establish a Russian military airbase in Belarus. In the past, the leadership in Belarus always found

a pretext to avoid stationing Russian military aircraft on its territory. The article asserts that the impetus to finally allow Russian aircraft on Belarusian soil stems less from Lukashenko's domestic problems than from NATO's "largest build-up of multinational aviation contingents near the borders of Belarus and our Kaliningrad region over the past two years."

However, as the article points out, Russia will not establish a new airbase in Belarus, but will instead station forces under "the guise of a combat training center," at an airbase in the city of Lida. The article stresses that "Russian Su-30SM fighters and pilots" will be there only as instructors to "teach Belarusians to fly and fight on our Su-30SM." Lida's proximity to the European Union border will make it an ideal location to "meet the unwanted 'guests' from NATO." The article concludes by suggesting that Lukashenko had no choice but to allow Russian Air Force assets in Belarus, asserting that Belarus must relinquish its "sovereignty, when the enemy is on the doorstep!"

“...We need it... when the enemy is on the doorstep!”

Source: Sergey Ischenko, “‘Бацьку’ Путин все же сломал: Белорусский аэродром Лида ждет российские Су-30СМ, (Tough Father, but Putin still broke: the Belarusian airfield Lida is waiting for Russian Su-30SM),” *Svobodnaya Pressa* (mostly pro-Kremlin news source), 2 June 2021. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/300090/>

The dispute between Moscow and Minsk about our airbase in the union republic is over. She will appear, but in the guise of a combat training center.

...Thus, the largest build-up of multinational aviation contingents near the borders of Belarus and our Kaliningrad region over the past two years is becoming a fact....

...It would seem that the simplest and most obvious of the possible countermeasures of the Union State is a return to the long-discussed issue at all levels of the deployment of Russian fighters on the territory of Belarus. That would make it possible, in the event of the outbreak of hostilities, to meet the attacking enemy with dignity and in a timely manner several hundred kilometers to the west than is possible for us today....

...All this is so obvious even for a person who is infinitely far from military affairs that it would be strange if Moscow and Minsk did not discuss such a possibility. They have been conducting a similar dialogue for ten years now. Let me briefly recall some of his milestones that have become known to the public.

...The final compromise, it seems, was found by the Russian and Belarusian defense ministries only by the beginning of this spring. The essence of the new idea: there really will be no Russian airbase in Belarus. But Russian Su-30SM fighters and pilots are likely to appear just now. Where exactly? In the city of Lida, at the airfield of which only attack aircraft of the Belarusian Air Force are based.

...The main thing is that in Lida we will teach Belarusians to fly and fight on our Su-30SM.... Let us, Alexander Grigorievich, let us fly together! Who would argue? The main thing is that there should be someone to meet the unwanted 'guests' from NATO. And the Lida airfield is suitable for this like no other. Since it is located at the very border with the European Union. 35 kilometers from the border with Lithuania (100 kilometers from Vilnius) and 120 kilometers from the border with Poland.

...We need it, your sovereignty, when the enemy is on the doorstep!