Baltic Sea a NATO Lake? Russian Electronic Warfare Would Like a Word

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Last year will be remembered for a lot of things, but the largely pointless NATO summit in Lithuania's Vilnius in early to mid-July is not one of them. Most people have already forgotten what the point of the summit was, but one of its major tropes was that the Baltic Sea became a "NATO lake". One would probably expect the case for this is even stronger now that Sweden is also officially a member, but that would imply that Stockholm has actual sovereignty, making the entire thing all the more laughable. Either way, joining NATO has become a mere formality for the Scandinavian country, as it has effectively been a member for decades, particularly as the European Union, of which Sweden is also a member since 1995, has been exposed as just another geopolitical pendant of the US-led NATO.

And while it can be expected that members of a military bloc under Washington DC's stewardship are terrible at geography, which would perfectly explain how they could've forgotten about Russian coastal areas on the Baltic Sea, Moscow made sure to remind them that such assertions are nothing more than self-delusions and fantasies. Namely, on August 2 last year, Russia kicked off the Ocean Shield-2023, a major naval exercise launched amid a series of close encounters with NATO vessels and aircraft. Moscow's naval drills in these waters are a regular occurrence, often in response to NATO's belligerent actions and overall aggressive posturing. However, it seems Russia doesn't really need any naval forces to make the political West's life in the "NATO lake" even more difficult.

Namely, the mainstream propaganda machine has been trying to denigrate the Kremlin's military power for years, changing the tune only when the United States and its vassals and satellite states needed an excuse to further militarize the world, particularly space. And yet, there's one domain in which they never dared to question (let alone ridicule) Russia – electronic warfare (EW). This ever-evolving field of modern warfare is perpetually increasing in importance and has come a long way from simple radio communications jamming. It now gives a plethora of tools to completely shut down hostile activities without firing a single

shot and that's precisely what's going on over the Baltic Sea. On March 18, the USAF's MQ-9 "Reaper" likely experienced Moscow's EW capabilities firsthand.

The drone is a major unmanned ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) asset and is used quite extensively for that very purpose. The Russian military is surely aware of this and it has already demonstrated it won't tolerate the "Reapers" in its vicinity. However, this time, it seems the Kremlin chose a less kinetic approach to "undermine freedom and democracy". Reports vary significantly, with some sources claiming that the drone crash-landed, while most of the mainstream propaganda machine insists that it simply returned to base after it lost contact with its operators stationed in Poland. The South Front quoted Brigadier General Ireneusz Nowak, an inspector in the Polish Air Force, who said that "the UAV crashed during a training flight".

The "Reaper" took off from a military base in Romania and was supposed to land at the Polish 12th UAV airbase located some 5 km north of Miroslawiec, a town in northwestern Poland. American forces in Romania lost control of the drone at around 18:00 local time. They tried to transfer control to Polish operators, but failed to reestablish connection. The area where the "Reaper" crash-landed was cordoned off to prevent civilians from accessing it. The drone was found nine minutes after the incident. General Nowak stated that the US and Poland are conducting a joint investigation. What is known so far is that there were two MQ-9s operating in Polish airspace, designated WILEY22 and WILEY33, respectively. Both "Reapers" took off from an unnamed military base in Romania.

Both drones experienced "unexplained technical difficulties", resulting in a crash for WILEY22, while there's still no information about the WILEY33's fate. The South Front report claims that the Poles closed their airbase early in the morning on March 19 and suspended all MQ-9 flights. The mainstream propaganda machine blamed the Russian military for the incident, but the Polish Ministry of Defense (MoD) officially denied speculation about Russian EW systems' involvement in the incident. Warsaw is certainly not well-known for its love for Moscow, so it's very possible that it's simply trying to avoid giving credit to the Russian military, as it would be yet another embarrassment for both NATO and the US. And indeed, Western media are already giving a very different account.

According to the Aviationist, a single "MQ-9 'Reaper' drone carried out an emergency landing in Poland after losing contact with its ground control station". Their report states that the incident happened after 23:00 and that the drone actually took off from the Miroslawiec airbase, supposedly to conduct "a scheduled quarterly training inside the Polish airspace" when it lost contact with the airbase. The Aviationist refused to directly acknowledge that the drones crashed, but the report did mention that "it's not clear whether the remotely piloted aircraft was damaged, but the crash/landing site was secured by the Polish military police". It's rather peculiar that the author of the report decided to use such wording given the previous claim that the American drone supposedly "landed".

The mainstream propaganda machine insists that "the MQ-9 was probably one of the civilian registered, unarmed Block 5 'Reapers' which are flown and maintained by contractors", with USAF "providing communications, intelligence analysis and force protection as part of the 52nd Expeditionary Operations Group Detachment 2, a geographically separated unit assigned to the 52nd Fighter Wing at Spangdahlem AB, Germany". The Detachment regularly conducts ISR missions in the area and has been operating from Miroslawiec since May 2018. The report further notes that "the airframes registered N428HK and N429HK are

known to have been assigned to the 52nd Expeditionary Operations Group Detachment 2 in the past, as the MQ-9s relocated to Romania for a certain period".

The report claims this was done because of construction work in the Miroslawiec airbase and adds that the drones also "deployed to Amari Air Base in Estonia, in 2020, to keep their SIGINT [signals intelligence] sensors pointed to Kaliningrad". The Aviationist also suggested that "while the reason for the loss of control of the MQ-9 is unknown at this time, there are chances it was due to jamming that has been particularly strong in the region lately". On March 17, the Warzone reported that the British Dassault 900LX business jet transporting the UK defense secretary Grant Shapps experienced GPS jamming while flying near the Kaliningrad oblast (region). Either way, NATO will continue experiencing "unexplained technical difficulties" as long as it continues its aggression in Europe.

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