

Deadly fighter jet crash in Ukraine claims the the life of a US pilot

Ryan Pickrell, provided by

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- **Both US Air Forces in Europe and the Ukrainian defense ministry confirmed that a Su-27 fighter aircraft crashed Tuesday during the ongoing Clear Sky 2018 joint military exercises in the Ukraine.**
- **The Ukrainian defense ministry announced that two pilots were killed in the crash, and USAFE revealed that a US service member was involved. USAFE later revealed that a US pilot was killed in the crash and that the deceased was a member of the Air National Guard.**
- **The airman was a member of the 144th Fighter Wing with the California Air National Guard. The pilot was killed during a single-aircraft familiarization flight, USAFE said in a statement Wednesday.**

Two pilots, one American and one Ukrainian, were killed in a crash during joint war games in the Ukraine.

A Ukrainian Su-27UB fighter aircraft crashed in an area about 185 miles southwest of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev during the ongoing Clear Sky 2018 exercises, US Air Forces in Europe said in a statement Tuesday. "We have seen reports claiming a U.S. casualty and can confirm a U.S. service member was involved in this incident."

The Ukrainian defense ministry confirmed the crash Tuesday, revealing that two bodies were identified. One, according to USAFE, was a Ukrainian pilot, and the other was a member of the 144th Fighter Wing with the California Air National Guard.

"This is a sad day for the United States and Ukraine," Maj. Gen. Clay Garrison, Commander of the California Air National Guard and the director of the Clear Sky exercises, said in a statement. "Our deepest condolences go out to the family, friends and fellow Airmen of both the U.S. Airman and Ukrainian aviator who were killed in the incident."

The situation is currently under investigation, and the airman's name is being temporarily withheld pending notification of next of kin.

The multinational Clear Sky exercises involve military personnel from nine countries determined to bolster interoperability through joint drills focused on "air sovereignty, air interdiction, air-to-ground integration, air mobility operations, aeromedical evacuation, cyber defense, and personnel recovery," US Air Forces in Europe explained in a separate statement.

"This is the largest exercise in the last four years. It involves more than 50 aircrafts from eight NATO member-states and our planes - of the Ukrainian Air Forces," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced last week, according to The Drive.

"The purpose of the exercises is to increase the level of interoperability of our combat aircrafts with the air forces of the United States and other member states of the [NATO] Alliance," he added.

The exercises began on Oct. 8 and were in their final week at the time of Tuesday's incident.

Update: This post has been updated with the additional information from USAFE on the American pilot killed in Tuesday's crash.