

Another U.S. Made F-16 Bites the Dust in Ukraine? Evaluating Russia's SAM 400 Air Defense System

By [Drago Bosnic](#)

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On December 26, [various sources reported](#) that the Russian military [shot down the Kiev Regime US-made F-16 fighter jet](#). The aircraft seems to have been downed while [attempting to launch missiles at the Zaporozhye oblast \(region\)](#). Vladimir Rogov, the co-chair of the Coordinating Council for the Integration of New Regions, was the first to publish preliminary information about the downing.

[According to his post on Telegram](#), “the F-16 aircraft was in position to launch a missile strike on the region, but it was shot down”. The Zaporozhye oblast is one of the four regions that [joined Russia after a referendum in September 2022](#). Most of it (approximately 70%) is under Russian control, but the city of Zaporozhye itself is still occupied by the Kiev regime, whose forces regularly attack residential areas in all four regions, often killing and maiming civilians it considers its own citizens.

Many of these attacks have so far been conducted [using NATO-sourced artillery and rocket systems, including the HIMARS](#). However, as the Russian military has become [quite effective in shooting down the rockets](#) fired by the extremely overhyped US-made system, the Neo-Nazi junta is becoming more desperate in its attempts to terrorize the population in the region.

The F-16 is certainly one of the platforms that could be used for such attacks, although its military usefulness is questionable at best. It should be noted that this is [the second confirmed case of an F-16 downed over NATO-occupied Ukraine](#), with the first one [neutralized back in late August](#). The Kiev regime and its overlords did all they could to ensure that confusion persists, as this unpleasant “surprise” ([we all knew it was inevitable](#)) came just a few weeks after the first F-16 was declared operational by the Neo-Nazi junta’s battered air force.

Obviously, the idea was to [deny any credit to the Russian military](#), all in order to avoid ruining the US-made jet’s reputation. The actual fate of the first downed F-16 is yet to be confirmed, but there are several possible scenarios. Firstly, we know that **Lieutenant Colonel Oleksii Mes** (call sign Moonfish), [one of the first pilots to complete training for the US-made jet](#), was [killed on August 26](#). Mes originally served in the 204th Tactical Aviation Brigade, stationed at the Lutsk Air Base in northwestern Ukraine. The 204th uses the Soviet-era MiG-29s (specifically the MU1 variant) and was slated to switch to F-16s once the training was done. Mes was reportedly [one of the few Ukrainian pilots with a good command of English](#), so he was immediately chosen for training. The exact circumstances of his death are still unclear, as there’s simply too much disinformation, especially in NATO.

At the time, there was speculation that he was killed in a missile strike, downed in a friendly fire incident involving a “Patriot” SAM (surface-to-air missile) system or possibly in air-to-air combat. Most sources kept avoiding even mentioning Russian long-range air defenses, [despite their unparalleled battle-tested performance](#). All of the aforementioned scenarios are possible. If the first one is true, there’s a good chance that an F-16 was destroyed on the ground, as on August 26, oblasts (regions) with major tactical aviation bases, including Khmelnytsky, Volyn and [Ivano-Frankivsk](#), were targeted by Russian long-range precision strikes. [According to military sources](#), the Kremlin also targeted the Starokonstantinov Air Base where those NATO-sourced jets were supposed to be based, as it’s one of just several airbases with the facilities necessary to accommodate the sensitive US aircraft.

The friendly fire scenario involving a “Patriot” battery was [first brought up by Mariana Bezuglaya, a Member of the Verkhovna Rada \(Parliament\)](#). However, this doesn’t necessarily make it true, [at least according to the Pentagon’s deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh](#), who said she couldn’t confirm the reports. This intentional ambivalence and [attempts to “play dumb”](#) were also used in relation to the latest F-16 downing, [with the Pentagon refusing to comment on it or provide any data](#).

And indeed, there’s virtually no publicly available information about the latest incident in Western media. The Kiev regime is expected to suppress it, particularly as a way to ensure the so-called [US/NATO “military aid” continues to be delivered into the “right hands”](#). If reports about losing such important US-made equipment expand, [the upcoming administration might use them to make further cuts in funding](#).

This is something that the [frontman Volodymyr Zelensky has been whining about for years](#), particularly with regard to the latest slowdown and delays in the delivery of new NATO-sourced weapons. [The steady advances of the Russian military](#) have only exacerbated the situation for the Kiev regime.

The Kremlin is not only extremely successful in using its top-of-the-line systems such as [the Su-57](#), but it also keeps expanding production, with the latest deliveries to the Russian military heavily increasing its already impressive conventional power projection. In fact, there are strong indicators that a Su-57S actually shot down the first F-16 back in late August. Many Russian jets could’ve accomplished this, including [the unrivaled Su-35S air superiority fighter](#) or the [superfast, high-flying MiG-31BM interceptor](#) (both can carry the now legendary R-37M hypersonic air-to-air missiles).

However, [according to John Helmer](#), who has been based in Russia since 1989, making him the longest-serving foreign correspondent in the country, the Russian military was keeping operational silence, “but there were hints from the Ukraine, as well as from [Russian military bloggers](#)”, that Lieutenant Colonel Mes was [likely killed](#) in his F-16 [by an air-to-air missile fired by the Su-57](#). Considering the saturation of the frontlines with various types of SAM (surface-to-air missile) systems and other air defenses, the Su-57S was certainly the best solution, as it has been conducting [deep-strike missions over NATO-occupied Ukraine for years at this point](#). This is particularly true when it comes to its new weapons such as the Izdeliye 180 (or R-87 in some military sources), a highly advanced scramjet-powered hypersonic air-to-air missile (top speed over Mach 5) which is to replace the R-77 and its derivatives.

There’s also the Izdeliye 810 (better known as the R-97 in military sources), a more advanced counterpart of the R-37M. It should be noted that this weapon is also hypersonic.

With a top speed of Mach 6-7 and a massive 400 km range, this missile effectively turns [the Su-57 into a “flying S-400”](#).

And speaking of the S-400, it could've certainly been used to down the F-16 in the latest incident. [The Russian SAM system can use a plethora of weapons](#), including extremely long-range missiles such as the 40N6E (maximum range 400 km) and the hypersonic 48N6 (depending on the variant, maximum range up to 250 km). Both of these could make short work of virtually any jet, [particularly older ones such as the F-16](#). Not to mention that the ground crews would be extra motivated, as various private companies and individuals in Russia are offering lucrative prizes for whoever accomplishes such a feat.

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[Drago Bosnic](#) is an independent geopolitical and military analyst. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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