

# Ukrainian F-16 Pilot Killed, Fueling Rumors About First Downed 'Falcon'

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*Member of the Kiev regime's Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), Ihor Polishchuk, [posted \(and then deleted\) an obituary to a Ukrainian pilot](#), Lieutenant Colonel Oleksii Mes (call sign Moonfish), [who was killed on August 26](#).*

*Mes was one of the [first pilots to complete F-16 training](#).*

*He also reportedly participated in the negotiations with the United States on the transfer of F-16 fighter jets to the Kiev government.*

*Mes served in the 204th Tactical Aviation Brigade, stationed at the Lutsk Air Base, 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 on US-made jets. It's unclear if he was killed at Lutsk or some other airbase. The exact circumstances of his death are also yet to be disclosed. Currently, [there's speculation that he was either killed in a missile strike](#) or possibly in air-to-air combat.*

If the latter is true, it could also mean that he flew an F-16 and was shot down either by [Russian long-range SAM \(surface-to-air missile\) systems](#) or possibly by fighters such as the [highly advanced Su-35S air superiority jet](#) or [superfast, high-flying MiG-31BM interceptor](#).

During the recent mass strikes on targets across the territory occupied by the Kiev regime, the Russian military used a plethora of missiles and drones. There are reports that the Kiev regime was forced to keep some of the F-16s in air to avoid their destruction on the ground.

However, this would also expose these jets to air defenses, interceptors and air superiority fighters. As of this writing, the hypothesis is yet to be confirmed, [but numerous Russian sources are already reporting on it](#). Another possibility is 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, home of the 7th Tactical Aviation Brigade](#), known for operating the Su-24M/MR tactical strike jets (converted to carry various NATO-sourced weapons, including the stealthy "Storm Shadow"/SCALP-EG air-launched, long-range cruise missiles). Immediately after Russian

missiles and drones were detected entering the Kiev regime's airspace, fighter jets (including F-16s) took off and loitered above the area at low altitude, [reportedly for two to three hours](#). Moscow's forces then waited for these jets to return to the airbase and then immediately [launched another strike](#), the result of which was the possible destruction of at least one F-16. Although this information is yet to be verified, there are many indicators that it could be true, including the possible triangulation of F-16s through Russian space-based ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) assets such as satellites.

Interestingly, Volodymyr Zelensky [boasted that F-16s were used to allegedly shoot down Russian cruise missiles](#) during the aforementioned [long-range precision strikes](#). If true, this would clearly indicate that the US-made jets were indeed flown during these strikes, exposing them to possible detection and destruction by the Russian military, [both in air and on the ground](#). There have been [numerous analyses of the possible effectiveness of F-16s](#) against the Kremlin's world-class SAM systems and/or aviation. Due to the Kiev regime's drastically lower technological base, [it never stood a chance in matching the Russian military's capabilities](#), particularly in air-to-air combat. There have been countless deaths among Ukrainian pilots flying what can only be described as suicide missions against such odds. Local media published numerous reports about this in recent months alone, demonstrating just how catastrophic the losses among pilots are.

On August 12, [Captain Oleksandr Myhulia of the Kiev-based 40th Tactical Aviation Brigade was killed](#). Back in mid-May, it was also reported that the 831st Tactical Aviation Brigade, based in Mirgorod, [lost Lieutenant Colonel Denys Vasyliuk](#), one of the best Ukrainian pilots at the time. Vasyliuk was the brigade's chief of staff and a deputy commander of an aviation squadron, making him one of the highest-ranking losses among pilots for the Neo-Nazi junta. Just two months prior, Major Andrii Tkachenko, a fighter jet pilot, [was killed in a combat mission over the Donbass](#). A month before him, Vladislav Rykov, a pilot in the 299th Tactical Aviation Brigade, as well as one of the most experienced among the Kiev regime forces, [was killed in action \(KIA\)](#). There were instances when the Neo-Nazi junta would lose three pilots in a single day. Namely, in August last year, [three Ukrainian pilots, including Andrii Pilshchykov \(call sign "Juice"\), were killed](#), which was an unprecedented loss for Kiev.

Thus, even if the reports about the possible destruction of the first NATO-sourced F-16 turn out to be mere rumors, the very loss of pilots capable of flying these [overhyped US-made jets](#) is a major setback. It takes years to properly train fighter pilots, particularly if there's a doctrinal and technological barrier (or even a linguistic one), as is the case between Ukrainian and NATO pilots, as well as their Soviet-era and Western-made fighter jets. [The former are far more robust and cost-effective](#), while also being reliable and easy to maintain. On the other hand, [NATO ones are a lot more sensitive](#).

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Featured image: An Air Force F-16 Viper parked just a few hundred feet from the wall of fire at the Fort Worth Alliance Air Show, Oct. 28, 2017 at Fort Worth, Texas. (Courtesy photo by Air Force Viper Demo Team)

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