

NATO's Largest-Ever Air Force Drills in Europe

written by Ezba Walayat | June 22, 2023



NATO began its largest ever air force deployment exercise in Europe on June 12, 2023. The exercise, called "Air Defender 23," involves over 250 aircrafts from 25 NATO and partner countries, with around 10,000 personnel taking part in it. The exercise is being held in Germany, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states. The goal of the exercise is to test NATO's ability to respond to a wide range of air threats, including air attacks, ballistic missile attacks, as well as cyber-attacks. The exercise will also test NATO's ability to coordinate air operations with its partner countries. The exercise comes at a time of heightened tensions between NATO and Russia. Russia has been amassing troops on its border with Ukraine, and NATO has been strengthening its presence in Eastern Europe in response. The exercise is seen as a way for NATO to demonstrate its readiness to defend its members against any threat. An attack on one member of NATO is considered an attack on all members, and all members must consent to membership applications under NATO's Article Five.



The exercise is being conducted in three phases. The first phase, which began on June 12, was focused on training and familiarization. The second phase will begin on June 19 and will focus on air defense and air interdiction. The third and final phase will begin on June 26, and focus will remain on large-scale air operations. The exercise is a significant show of force by NATO, and it is a clear message to Russia that NATO is prepared to defend its members against any threat. The exercise is being led by the German Air Force, and it is the largest air force exercise that NATO has conducted since the Cold War. Lieutenant General Ingo Gerhartz, Chief of the German Air Force said in a statement “The significant message we are sending is that we can defend ourselves.”

According to Germany’s Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, the NATO air forces are “of central importance in the event of an attack because they are first responders to secure the population and also their own armed forces.” According to Pistorius, the goal of the drill is to make it clear that NATO and the German Air Force are ready to defend themselves. Additionally, he said, this applied to Russian President Vladimir Putin and to anyone “who threatens our freedom and our security.”