

Poland will train Ukrainian pilots to fly U.S.-made F-16 jets

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Warsaw, June 3 (RHC)-- Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has said that his country will set up a training schedule for Ukrainian pilots to fly U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets, which are desperately sought by Kiev to boost its air force against Russia.

A number of countries have volunteered to host the F-16 training of Ukrainian pilots. Poland, a neighbor of Ukraine and one of its biggest supporters has said for months it is ready for the training. "We have

compiled a schedule for these classes. Poland will help Ukraine train F-16 fighter pilots," Morawiecki said at a press conference held after a meeting of European leaders, also attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in Moldova.

Earlier in May, Britain announced during a summit of European leaders in Reykjavik, Iceland, that it was working with the Netherlands to build a so-called international "jet coalition" to help Ukraine obtain F-16 fighter jets from its mostly Western allies.

Russia has already warned against sending the aircraft, arguing that the move raises the question of NATO's direct military involvement in the war.

Initially, U.S. President Joe Biden had said his country would not provide Ukraine with the jets. Last month, however, he told leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) countries in Japan that Washington was prepared to help train the Ukrainian pilots of F-16 fighter jets.

Ukraine, which largely operates aged Soviet-era warplanes, has placed the U.S.-made F-16 at the top of its wish list.

After the meeting, Zelensky said that the F-16 fighter jets he is seeking will be supplied by the US, stressing that he had "heard powerful support from many countries." "With the help of the United States we will create this coalition," the Ukrainian leader added.

The meeting on Thursday was mainly a symbolic show of support for Ukraine, whose president is confident that a coalition of countries would form to provide Kiev with Western fighter jets and Patriot missile-defense systems.

"I can say that this meeting was very constructive and positive. I don't want to speak on behalf of several prime ministers here. But several prime ministers who have Patriot systems promised quick delivery of these systems. Very good anti-missile and anti-aircraft systems for Ukraine," Morawiecki further said.

Late last month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that his country's military is capable of reacting to the deliveries of Western F-16 warplanes to Ukraine.

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