Italian Eurofighters in Action over the Baltic: Drone Shot Down in Latvia

Published on 14/08/2026

An **Italian Air Force Eurofighter**, engaged under NATO command in the defense of Baltic airspace, shot down a drone that entered **Latvia's** airspace on Friday, August 14.

The intervention took place as part of the Alliance's air surveillance and defense system on the eastern flank. Two Italian Eurofighters took off on alert from the base in **Šiauliai, Lithuania**, while two Turkish F-16s, deployed in Ämari, Estonia, were scrambled for support. One of the Italian fighters then destroyed the unmanned aircraft over a sparsely populated area. NATO confirmed that all aircraft involved were operating under its command and that an investigation into the incident has been opened.

Riga Thanks Italy

Latvian Foreign Minister **Baiba Braze** publicly thanked the Italian allies for their contribution to the protection of Baltic skies and the safeguarding of NATO airspace integrity.

The incident is said to have occurred in northeastern Latvia, near **Rugāji**, about 35 kilometers from the Russian border. Latvian authorities have begun searching for the wreckage in a wooded area.

The Origin of the Drone Remains to be Determined

Caution is needed regarding the drone's origin.

Initial reconstructions suggested the possibility that it was a **Ukrainian aircraft that went off course**, possibly due to Russian electronic warfare activities and disruption of navigation systems.

The origin, however, **has not yet been officially confirmed**. Reuters reports that Latvian authorities have not yet definitively identified the drone and that a senior Riga official has urged not to jump to conclusions. The Latvian Ministry of Defense, however, considers it possible that the incursion was caused by Russian electronic warfare activities in the region.

This is an important distinction: **the downing by the Italian Eurofighter is confirmed; the potential Ukrainian origin of the drone remains a hypothesis under investigation**.

NATO Strengthens Eastern Flank Defense

The episode confirms how the operational scenario over Eastern European countries has changed.

NATO missions in Baltic skies no longer only involve the identification and escort of aircraft approaching allied airspace. The proliferation of drones, missiles, and remotely piloted systems used in the Russo-Ukrainian war has increased the risk of incursions, accidental or otherwise, within Alliance countries.

In this context, NATO is progressively shifting from a traditional **Air Policing** concept to a broader **Air Defence** posture, capable of responding even to threats requiring immediate intervention and, when necessary, the use of weapons.

The downing over Latvia represents a concrete demonstration of this.

Another Drone Crashes in Romania

Almost simultaneously, another unmanned aircraft crashed in **Romania**, in Tulcea County, near the border with Ukraine.

The drone fell in a wooded area near Luncavița, causing an explosion and a fire. According to the Romanian Ministry of Defense, the object had not been detected by military radar because it was flying at a very low altitude.

Romania has repeatedly been affected in recent months by drone incursions or crashes related to military operations conducted on the nearby Ukrainian coasts of the Black Sea and along the Danube.

The incidents in Latvia and Romania once again highlight how the war in Ukraine is putting increasing pressure on the air surveillance and defense systems of NATO's eastern flank.

For Italy, the interception on August 14 primarily confirms the fully operational nature of the Air Force deployment in the Baltic countries: **when the drone violated allied airspace, the Italian Eurofighters took off on alert and one of them neutralized the threat.**

News link: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/2026/08/14/caccia-italiani-abbattono-in-lettonia-un-drone-probabilmente-ucraino_96617dd2-1d09-4ac6-8f49-02883796ca08.html