

U.S., Sweden Overfly Russia, Belarus

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Swedish SAAB-340B Open Skies aircraft

Inspectors from the United States and Sweden will conduct [observation] flights over Russia and Belarus under the Open Skies Treaty starting on Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Sunday.

“In the period from October 29 to November 2 a joint group of U.S. and Swedish inspectors will conduct surveillance flights on board a SAAB-340B Swedish surveillance aircraft over the territory of the treaty participants, namely the Russian Federation and Belarus,” a ministry spokesman said.

The flights will be executed along the route coordinated earlier with Russian and Belarusian specialists, who will be on board the aircraft monitoring implementation of agreements on the use of technical equipment for the observation flight, he said.

He added that the U.S. and Swedish inspectors will be conducting these flights on board an aircraft that is not intended to carry weapons and that has been certified by international experts and specialists.

The Open Skies Treaty, signed in 1992 on an initiative of U.S. President George H.W. Bush, established a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of its member states to promote openness and transparency of military forces and activities.

The treaty entered into force on January 1, 2002, and its regime covers the national territories (land, islands, internal and territorial waters) of all 34 States Parties. It is an important element of the European security structure.